

MELODRAMA, LIVE

One night the press corps
ran out of questions
and slowly began to laugh
at the President of The United States.
Everyone was there, all the big
shot paper guys, the networks.
And when it finally fell
it was like an avalanche
sweeping everything in its path.
Martha, said John, come look.
Martha came in. What.
Look, they're laughing at him.
Martha sat down to watch.
What for? What'd he say?
Nothing, said John, they just
started laughing — like that.
It went on for a long while
and then an announcer broke
in to say, We'll have an analysis
of this apparent breakdown
of respect for the nation's
highest office right after this
quick commercial message.
Funny, said Martha, I feel
sort of sorry for him. That's
it! cried John, jumping up.
I'm leaving! Go ahead! I am!
Then go! Just go, go now go!
OK! After he slammed the door,
she watched the rest in tears.
There goes everything, she whispered,
over and over and over again.

THE DECLINE OF AMERICA

It was around 4 PM or so
when this program came
on about masturbation.
There we were, me and
my buddy, his dad, mother
and grandmother, watching.
The first thing they said was
get out of the room if you
are not an adult.
His mother giggled
and looked at her mother,
who apparently did not
at all understand.

Then they showed the panel:
a middle-aged woman who
ran a masturbation clinic
somewhere out West, one of
her former lady patients,
and a male doctor who scowled.
There was a big studio audience,
mostly young nervous couples.

First the clinic lady explained
how they get all their clothes
off and sit in a circle and
if there's any problem well
then they get out the vibrators.
At that point, the grandmother
said to her daughter, Barbara?
And Barbara said, Yes mother?
Barbara, is this show what
I think it's about here?
Well, it sure does look like
it, mama. Well! she replied,
but stayed put on the couch.

Rudy, his dad, said, "Hell,
all that is what we used
to call the circle jerk.
No one said a word.
He took a hit off his Coke.

The show went on a while
more, with the doctor shouting
at the clinic lady that this
was all crap, just self-
love, total self-love. She
hissed back that that was
the whole damn point and
the audience, most of it,
broke into applause.

Then a little gal from Idaho
stood up and said to the
nation
that in fact her marriage to
John, yes, he's right here,
her marriage to John
had really improved since she
got over it and just started
masturbating whenever she
damn well pleased. John nodded.

I'd been out of the country
a few years, and Rudy said,
Well, boy, what the hell
do you think of that? Has
the USA gone to pot or what?

I said, It sure has, and he
smiled and said, real loud:
Who wants some more of
that coconut cake, mama.
Get these boys some
more of your fine cake.

And up she jumped
as he hit the zapper
for something else.
We've got a dish,
he said. We can watch
just about anything
that's on in the whole
wide world. You got
that where you live?

Grandma had started snoring.
Then in came the cake.

TRASH: 2

Take all the waste
of my body and of
my mind and gather
it in one place.
How much would there
be? How many wadded
poems? How many steak
bones and beer bottles?
Imagine the particular
smell.

— Kyle Jarrard

Suresnes France

GHAZAL: HOUDINI

Driving alone somewhere in the Midwest.
Thunderclouds breaking on the fields' edges.

I wash developer across the paper,
only the outline of your face emerges.

frogs suction to my window. Small red hearts
pound through the thin film of belly.